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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, May 12, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Herbs for an Old Fashioned Garden." Information from W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry; menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics.

Leaflet available: "Pork in Preferred Ways."

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The other day I called on W.R.B., our friend the Garden Specialist.

"Good morning, Aunt Sammy," said the Garden Specialist. "What can I do for you, this bright May morning?"

"Tell me about herbs," I said. "Did you ever see an old-fashioned garden, with its beds of sage and thyme, and spearmint, and sweet marjoram, and half a dozen more kinds of herbs? Grandmother used to call them 'yarbs.' She grew them for flavoring, and as medicine when grandfather or the children were ailing. Can you tell me how to grow these old-fashioned herbs?"

"Yes, indeed," said the Garden Specialist. "Herbs are easy to grow. I've often wondered why more women don't raise herbs in their backyard gardens. Your Menu Specialist often mentions home-grown flavorings. For example, I know she mentions sage and thyme. There was chopped celery in her turkey dressing last Christmas, and she suggested mint sauce with lamb the other day.

"As I said before, herbs are easy to grow. Most of them may be started by simply sowing the seeds in the bed where the plants are to grow. Sage is one of the important garden herbs, used for flavoring. Did you know that sage is often grown entirely for its beauty? The Blossoms of the sage plant are very ornamental.

"The plants may be started from seed, or by pieces of rooted stems, taken from the side of an older plant. Whenever the branches droop and come in contact with the soil, they form roots. These may be taken off, and used to start new plants. It takes some time to grow the plants from seed. You will get results more quickly if you buy two or three good plants. Before the flowers appear, shear off the leaves and tips of the young plants. Tie these leaves in small bunches, and hang them in a shady place to dry. To store, wrap the bundles in paper, or put them in a pasteboard box. If the leaves are very dry, store them in a fruit jar, or in a tin can with a reasonably tight fitting lid. Two or three sage plants will be enough to give you and your neighbors all the sage leaves needed for flavoring. Any other herb you are particularly interested in?"

"Yes--- there's thyme. Don't you remember the song: 'I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows; with sweet musk roses, and with eglantine'? What does thyme look like, W.R.B.?"

"Old-fashioned thyme," explained my friend, "is very ornamental, with its mass of dark green foliage, and purple-white flowers. It can be grown in the same way as sage, except that the plants are smaller, and can be set about a foot apart. Sage plants should be set at least two feet apart. When the plants are at their best, they are sheared, and the tips of the branches, with their abundance of leaves, and blossoms, are tied in very small bunches. Then they are spread on a piece of cheesecloth to dry in a shady place. I can remember when my mother used to give me tea made of thyme -- mostly during the green apple season. I was obliged to take thyme tea, for stomach disorder.

"Mint is another herb grown in every old-fashioned garden -- spearmint for flavoring spring lamb, and peppermint, the oil of which is now used a great deal in candy and gum. The easiest way to start either spearmint or peppermint is to get a few of the plants. Set them in a bed of rich soil. If you don't watch them, the plants will soon spread all over the place. Both spearmint and peppermint like a rather moist soil, but they will grow on any good garden soil if given water from time to time. Shear the mint, as you would sage and thyme. The tips of the branches, with their tender leaves, are dried in small bunches for winter use. Is there anything more refreshing on a hot July day than a glass of ice-cold lemonade or iced tea, topped off with a sprig of fresh spearmint? The blossoms of spearmint, too, are very attractive, so this herb can be included in the list of ornamental plants.

"Tarragon, which is used for flavoring vinegar, is another of the old-fashioned garden herbs that are easy to grow. It can be started from seed, and treated in about the same way as sage or thyme.

"Dill is used for making what are called dill pickles. This herb, like the others, can be grown from seed. Dill has a very distinct and pleasing flavor. Is that enough, Aunt Sammy?"

"Enough for to-day," I said. "If I come back tomorrow, will you tell me how to raise parsley, and celery seed, and capers?"

W.R.B. said that he would, and he was as good as his word--- if not better. Tomorrow I'll tell you what he told me.

Now, if you will put away your spade and your hoe, and hang your garden hat beside the kitchen door, and sit down beside your radio, I'll broadcast a menu. Don't we housewives have a lot to do in the spring of the year? And I might add, in the summer, and the fall, and the winter, too. Reminds me of an old joke. The census taker asked the housewife: "What do you do?"

"I keep house, scrub, scour, bake, wash dishes, cook, do the laundry, iron, and sew."

And how do you suppose the census taker listed her? "Housewife -- no occupation."

Here's the menu for this busy spring day: Stuffed Pork Chops With Apples; Mashed Potatoes; Dandelion Greens and Spinach; Coffee Gelatin with Cream; Whipped or Plain.

If I had time, I'd like to broadcast the recipe for Stuffed Pork Chops with Apples -- it's such a dandy dish. If you have a copy of "Pork in Preferred Ways," you already have a recipe. It's on page four -- the recipe, and two illustrations. Use rib pork chops, thick ones, and cut pockets in them for the stuffing. The stuffing is made of celery, onion, parsley, bread crumbs, and seasonings. Put the stuffing in the pork chops, and skewer the edges with toothpicks. Then, when the stuffed chops are ready for the oven, place on top of each chop, cut side down, one half of an apple which has been cored but not pared. You can't imagine how delicious it is, till you've tried it. Full directions in the leaflet, "Pork in Preferred Ways."

Our dessert to-day is Coffee Gelatin with Cream, Whipped or Plain. It's a very short recipe-- I'll read it:

2 tablespoons gelatin	1 quart hot coffee, and
1/2 cup cold water	Pinch of salt.
1/2 cup sugar	

Five ingredients for Coffee Gelatin with Cream: (Repeat)

Soften the gelatin in the cold water. Combine it with the sugar, salt, and hot coffee. Stir until the sugar and gelatin have dissolved. Pour into a wet mold and leave in a cold place until set. Serve with whipped cream or with plain cream.

Another menu done: Stuffed Pork Chops with Apples; Mashed Potatoes; Dandelion Greens, and Spinach-- that is, cooked together; Coffee Gelatin with Cream, Whipped or Plain.

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Tomorrow: "More About Herbs for an Old-Fashioned Garden."

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